

**PATENT**

App. Ser. No.: 09/749,106

Atty. Dkt. No. ROC920000234US1

PS Ref. No.: IBM2K0234.Y1

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Previously Presented) A method for determining a price of a program transmitted by a programming provider to subscribers, comprising:

receiving, via a network connection, a purchase order for a program from a subscriber belonging to a subscriber group defined by two or more subscribers, wherein each subscriber belonging to the subscriber group maintains an independent account with the programming provider whereby the subscriber pays the programming provider in order to receive paid for programming, and wherein each subscriber belonging to the subscriber group may elect to purchase or not purchase the program;

determining a first price for the purchase order if the program has been purchased by a threshold number of subscribers belonging to the subscriber group; and

determining a second price, higher than the first price, if the program has not been purchased by the threshold number of subscribers belonging to the subscriber group.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein determining the first and second prices comprises executing a pricing program.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising preparing and sending an invoice to the subscriber for the program.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the threshold number of subscribers is greater than one and is some portion of all the subscribers of the subscriber group.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the threshold number is all the subscribers of the subscriber group.

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6. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising providing, via a network communication, at least one of the first price and the second price to the subscriber prior to the subscriber purchasing the program.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the purchase order indicates an intent of the subscriber to view the program at a future time.
8. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising notifying at least one other subscriber in the subscriber group of the purchase order.
9. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising receiving, prior to receiving the purchase order, an electronic message indicating an intent of the subscriber to purchase the program.
10. (Original) The method of claim 9, further comprising notifying, via a network communication, at least one other subscriber in the subscriber group of the intent.
11. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising determining whether the subscriber belongs to the subscriber group prior to determining the price.
12. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the step of determining whether the subscriber belongs to the subscriber group comprises accessing a subscriber database.
13. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising processing a request to initiate a network dialog session with at least one other subscriber in the subscriber group.

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14. (Original) The method of claim 13, handling messages sent between subscribers participating in the network dialog session.

15. (Currently Amended) A system for transmitting programs to subscribers, comprising:

a database containing subscriber groups ~~each~~;

a programming provider system connected to the database and configured to:

receive, via a network communication, purchase orders for programs from a plurality of subscribers;

determine a first price for each purchase order if more than a threshold number of subscribers purchasing the same program belong to a common subscriber group, wherein each subscriber belonging to the subscriber group maintains an independent account with the programming provider whereby the subscriber pays the programming provider in order to receive paid for programming, and wherein each subscriber may elect to purchase or not purchase the same program; and

determine a second price, higher than the first price, for each purchase order if less than a threshold number of subscribers purchasing the same program belong to a common subscriber group.

16. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the programming provider is at least one of a cable provider and a satellite provider.

17. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the programming provider is connected to the plurality of subscribers by a network connection.

18. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the programs are one of a view-on-demand program and a pay-per-view program.

19. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the programs are movies.

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20. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the programs are entertainment events.

21. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the programs are transmitted at a predetermined time.

22. (Currently Amended) A system, comprising:  
a plurality of signal processing units each associated with one of a plurality of subscribers, wherein the plurality of subscribers make up subscriber groups each including at least two subscribers; and

a programming provider system connected to the signal processing units and configured to:

transmit fee-based programming events to the signal processing units; and

determine prices of programming events purchased by the plurality of subscribers, wherein a price for each programming event is determined according to a number of purchase orders for the same programming event received from subscribers belonging to a same subscriber group, wherein the price decreases in proportion to increasing orders from different subscribers belonging to the same subscriber group, wherein each subscriber belonging to the subscriber group maintains an independent account with the programming provider whereby the subscriber pays the programming provider in order to receive paid for programming, and wherein each subscriber may elect to purchase or not purchase each programming event.

23. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 22, wherein programming provider system is configured to:

determine a first price for each purchase order if more than a threshold number of subscribers purchasing the same programming event belong to the same subscriber group; and

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determine a second price, higher than the first price, for each purchase order if less than a threshold number of subscribers purchasing the same programming event belong to the same subscriber group.

24. (Original) The system of claim 22, further comprising a database accessible by the programming provider system and containing a subscriber identifier for each of the plurality of subscribers and a subscriber group identifier for each subscriber group.

25. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein the plurality of signal processing units are configured to communicate messages via a communication network.

26. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein the programming provider system is at least one of a cable provider and a satellite provider.

27. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein the programming provider system is connected to the plurality of subscribers by a network connection.

28. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein the programming events are one of a view-on-demand program and a pay-per-view program.

29. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein the programming events are movies.

30. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15, wherein, if more than the threshold number of subscribers purchase the same program, the programming provider is further configured to transmit electronic offer notifications to those subscribers belonging to the common subscriber group who have not yet purchased the same program, the electronic offer notifications indicating that the same program may be purchased for a reduced fee as a result of the threshold number of subscribers purchasing the same program.

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31. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 15, wherein, the programming provider is further configured to:

receive electronic intent-to-view notifications from the plurality of subscribers indicating an intent to view a given program; and

for a given electronic intent-to-view notification from a given subscriber of a given subscriber group, sending an electronic alert notification to the other subscribers of the given subscriber group, the electronic alert notification indicating the intent of the given subscriber to view the given program and further indicating availability of a price reduction if the threshold number of subscribers of the given subscriber group purchase the given program.